



GOOD NEWS! January, 2025

Scenes of the Season: Advent & Christmas, 2024



Special thanks to Connie Green and Jill Howe for the pictures!

Self Talk | Pastor Clay

As I write this article, I recently received the news flash that President Jimmy Carter has died after over 100 years of living. I have a fondness for Jimmy Carter. It might have to do with his being the first presidential election I have a solid memory of, or that he taught Sunday School at his church for decades after serving as President of the United States. It could be related to all the humanitarian work he did, and especially swinging a hammer for Habitat for Humanity, or it could be related to meeting him personally twice. One of those times was at the first meeting of the New Baptist Covenant organization which he helped create. I sat in the front, and he and his wonderful wife sat next to me. We chatted and then worshiped together.

I have read some of his books, listened to several speeches, and at times found myself affirming what he wrote and said and at other times thinking he was off base, but at all times respecting a man who made it his life goal to live out his faith by what he did and how he treated others.

Here's how Carter described his commitment in his 2010 autobiography *A Full Life: Reflections at Ninety*: "My religious faith had become a minor issue during the [1976] campaign, when I responded 'yes' to a reporter's question, 'are you a born-again Christian?' Some reporters implied that I was having visions or thought I received daily instructions from Heaven. My traditional Baptist belief was that there should be strict separation between church and state. I ended the longstanding practice of inviting Billy Graham and other prominent pastors to have services in the White House and our family assumed the role of normal worshippers in a church of our choice." (Time.com)



At any rate, I spend time reflecting on people who ended this life in 2024 that had an impact on my life, love, and ministry, with Jimmy being the most recent one. Kacy's dad, Randy, comes to mind, a man whose passion to worship Jesus often produced joyous tears. Pastor Ken, whom I barely knew but was honored to share in the celebration of his life, left imprints of care and love on many people I have met. And one of my college professors, Tony Campolo, who was the speaker at the youth conference when my life was united with Jesus the Christ.

With gratitude to God for sharing these lives with me, there is also a resolve: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Running with you in 2025! Grace and peace,

Pastor Clay

In Gratitude

*To the congregation of Mt. Washington Baptist Church, A heartfelt thank you for helping our pantry serve needy families who reside in our community, workers at the race track, PBJ sandwiches for Our Daily Bread once weekly, backpacks for the unsheltered, and spoiled food for Red Oak Animal Rescue and a local pig farmer – to assure zero waste. In 2024 the pantry will have served 24,000+ persons (up from 23,433 last year) with meats, fresh produce, staples, and necessary hygiene items. \$15 gift cards were given to each family for the holidays for meat or produce. We strive to assure that food insecure persons have healthy meals to put on their tables. For **42 years** we have operated our ministry by donations exclusively. All work is completed with our current 100+ **all-volunteer** staff, six days a week. With the recent rise in food costs, our financial resources are stretched thin; however, we have been able to serve our clients effectively, thanks to kind and generous persons like you! With warmest regards, Janey Shestina, SEM volunteer*

Weekly Schedule

Sundays

9:00 a.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal
9:15 a.m. Youth Sunday School Class
10:00 a.m. Worship Service & Children's Church
(in-person and streaming live on Facebook)

Wednesdays

6:00 p.m. Virtual Bible Study & Prayer Meeting
(streaming live on Facebook)

Coming Up in January . . .

* **Sunday Mornings, 10 a.m.** – A new 14-week sermon series, *What If?*, kicks off on Sunday, January 5. Just a few of the “big questions” that we’ll tackle during the first quarter of 2025 are these:

- ~What if Jesus chose you (not the other way around)?
- ~What if church membership = discipleship?
- ~What if we practiced Sabbath?
- ~What if we trusted Jesus with our past? Our future? Our dark places?
- ~What if we prioritized not-yet-followers of Jesus?
- ~What if we were known as a community of prayer?

* **Wednesday Evenings, 6:00 p.m.** – Pastor Jim resumes his weekly Virtual Bible Studies, beginning on January 8, with a look at the book of 1 John. You’ll find these weekly live-streamed studies on the church’s Facebook page.

* **CPC Meeting, January 12** – Members of the Council for Planning and Communication will meet on Sunday, January 12, to prepare for the Annual Business Meeting. Please remember to get your reports to Darby by Wednesday, January 8, at the latest.

* **Baby Shower for Tacie & Fred Anderson, January 19** – All are invited to a baby shower for the Andersons, in the Fellowship Hall after church, as we celebrate the coming of a baby boy! A soup and sandwich luncheon will be served. Fred & Tacie are registered at Amazon Baby Registry ([amazon.com/baby-reg](https://www.amazon.com/baby-reg)).

* **Annual Business Meeting, January 26** - Our Annual Business Meeting, in which we recap 2024 and look ahead to the ministries that we will prioritize in 2025, will take place immediately after the morning worship service. Please plan to stay after church that morning for this important meeting.



Photo credit: local12.com

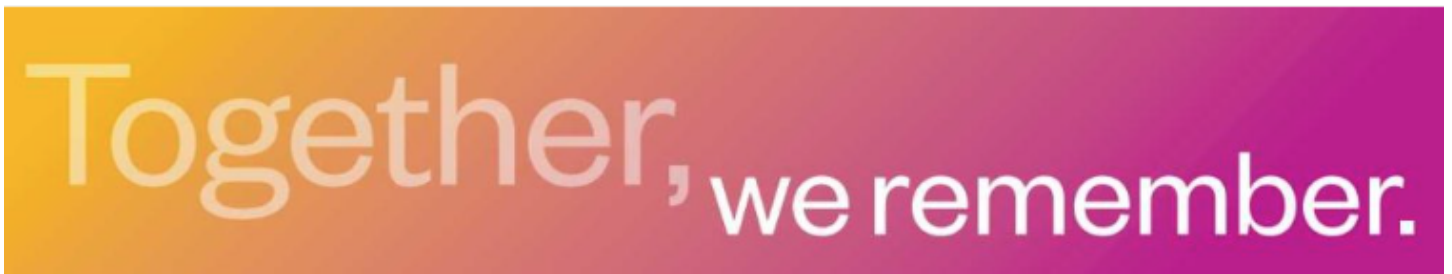
Music

The song "Morning Has Broken" became a well-known song in the 1970s after the pop musician Cat Stevens recorded it. This song actually has some of its roots in the 1880s when a Scottish Highland wandering singer was singing it. It was overheard and preserved. Tradition states it was a Gaelic hymn with lost origins. A Scottish poet added different words in 1918. Then in the 1920s, a playwright, novelist and journalist named Eleanor Farjeon was asked to write another set of words which became the hymn we know now. She based the lyrics on Genesis 1:5, the Creation story, and called the piece, "Thanks for the Day."

With the beginning of a new year, the words are a reminder of the glory of God and how marvelous His creation is. "Morning has broken, like the first morning," opens the song, and I apply this to the New Year. It's a new opportunity to praise God and thank Him daily for the bounty and beauty given to us! ~ Rev. Jim Cagle, Minister of Music

Missions

ABC USA Promotes the Retired Ministers & Missionaries Offering



Each year, American Baptist churches take up a special offering, the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering, to remember and support ordained ministers and commissioned missionaries who have devoted 15 years or more to ABCUSA, including their surviving spouses. Funds donated by member churches are distributed as thank you checks and emergency assistance. With gift revenue from the 2023 RMMO, 3,382 thank you checks were distributed averaging \$177 per recipient, a tangible expression of our enduring gratitude for their service. Additionally, \$366,196 was made available to meet emergency and financial special needs.

If you'd like to make a donation to the RMMO, you may pick up an information sheet and envelope from the Welcome Center.

Christmas Help

On December 14, the Mission Board and outreach team, led by Jim Cagle, distributed food vouchers, a variety of Christmas gifts, and cards to fourteen area families. The families responded with smiles, hugs, and expressions of gratitude. Thanks to all for your donations to make this possible.

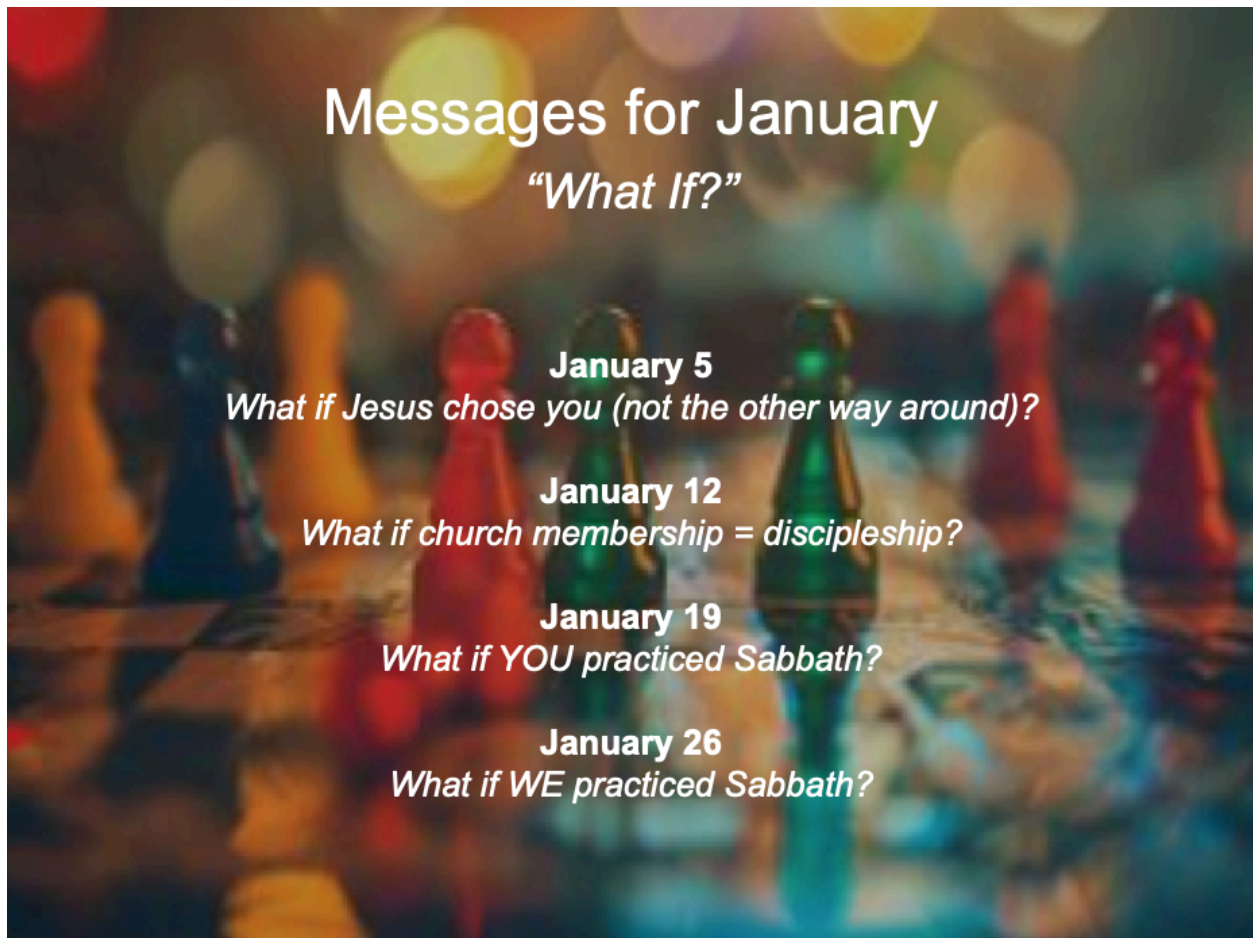
A Caring Place Needs Donations

A Caring Place, the pregnancy help center on Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road, is seeking donations of the following items: gently used, warm clothing for boys and girls sizes 2T-6T; gently worn shoes for young children; Enfamil formula, all kinds; Similac formula, all kinds; warm receiving blankets for boys; diapers sizes 3, 4, 5, & 6; and baby wipes. For more information or to make arrangements to drop off donations, contact Shawna Dunn at 513-753-HELP.

A Family in Ministry

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Our Staff and Leaders

Rev. Clay Self, Pastor | Rev. Jim Cagle, Minister of Music
Dr. Jih-Ting Chen, Accompanist | Darby Atchison, Administrative Assistant
Todd Racer, Praise Band Leader | Tim Rechel, Tower Bells Director
Tammy Caldwell & Robin Beier, Day Care Co-Directors